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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED.

BY OLIVIA HOWARD DUNBAR AND GERHARDT C. MARS.

"THE SHADOW WORLD."*

IF there is anything more mysterious than the psychic forces that interpenetrate our life, it is the instinctive determination of the average intelligent human being to ignore them, even, so far as possible, to discredit them. Thus, ignorance of these matters has in itself become a fetish and a superstition; consideration of them a practice involving disrepute. Not only will we ourselves know nothing of occult mysteries,—is the usual unspoken formula; we will suspect anybody who attempts to know. These things being true, the reasons why it is desirable to publish such a book as Mr. Hamlin Garland's "Shadow World" become plain. A simple outline of a vast and loosely understood subject could not be more sanely given. It is true that superficially the book has irritating qualities. The invention of characters and dialogue, exceedingly tame when compared with the essential material, and the attempt thus to string the material on a fictional thread unnecessarily obscure a narrative otherwise lucid. But inasmuch as the book does not ask consideration as literature, its faults, which might be intolerable in a work of fiction, may be passed over. What the "Shadow World" really is is a substantial popular tract. Readers who are themselves investigators, or who are familiar with the authorities from whom Mr. Garland liberally and aptly quotes, have probably no need of a book that does not pretend to offer new discoveries or fresh theories. And the book is emphatically not of a quality to recommend it to the philosopher or the mystic. But the every-day

* "The Shadow World." By Hamlin Garland. New York: Harper & Brothers.

hard-headed obstructionist should profit from the wholesome bewilderment it will afford him.

Mr. Garland, as his book tells us, fearlessly undertook the investigation of the Shadow World in the companionship of a group of men and women and with the assistance of several successive mediums who, it is of course understood, were restrained by "test conditions" rigid enough to exclude the possibility of fraud. The results, startling as many of them are, correspond in a general way to those that are usually obtained in such cases. There appears to be no reason why scores of such books could not have been produced. They have not, however; and that fact gives this volume a peculiar if accidental value. It is a clear-eyed and quite unimaginative piece of reporting, without metaphysical, religious or literary bias, of a series of phenomena that included levitation, telekinesis, trance impersonations and even, in one case, materialization. Happenings so dispassionately observed and certified to, the ghost-denying man cannot merely brush aside as nonsense.

While bound and nailed to their seats by a tangle of torturing devices, Mr. Garland's mediums evoked lusty and muscular (but invisible) phantoms who spoke in loud voices, made jokes and laughed uproariously at them, wrote voluminously on sheets of paper, hurled books and other objects about the room and displayed alert and responsive intelligence. Personal "spirit-messages" were not the object of the sittings and this phase of the subject is touched upon lightly. Nevertheless, the chapter that will probably arouse the keenest popular interest is one falling precisely within this province in that it describes alleged communications from the dead composer, Edward MacDowell, who was a close friend of Mr. Garland. This "spirit," manifesting itself first through slate-writing, later in whispers, strove eagerly to dictate a musical composition, but found both Mr. Garland and the medium unequal to the task of co-operating. At the next sitting, therefore, another friend, Henry B. Fuller, the author, was called in and the score was completed at the "spirit's" energetic dictation. "In all this work," Mr. Garland says, "(MacDowell) carried himself like the creative master. He held to a plane apparently far above the psychic's musical knowledge, and often above that of his amanuensis. He was highly technical throughout in both the composition and the playing, and (Fuller)

followed his will, for the most part, as if the whispers came from (MacDowell) himself."

Every detail of this remarkable experience is well worth reading. Not a feature of it was trivial or incoherent. A spirit could hardly manifest itself in a more dignified and convincing manner. The account of it will perhaps seem, even to many intelligent persons, as an absolute proof of the spiritualistic theory. And yet Mr. Garland declares himself unable to believe that the apparent personality present at these sittings, vocal, even creative as it was, was anything more than a compounding of the psychic, Mr. Fuller, and himself, with perhaps the addition of "fugitive natures afloat in the ether."

Which leads to the theory of these marvels, most of which are, after all, as old as history. And this theory is one that the person who has been panic-stricken lest he should have to accept spiritualism may find some satisfaction in reading about. The spiritistic interpretation of all apparently supernormal phenomena has always been the vulgar one; the interpretation, that is, of children, of savages, of the untutored everywhere. But it has also, after many years of profound study, been that of the most competent investigators in England and America, from the sublimely reasonable Mr. Myers to the rather truculent Dr. Hyslop. However, it is the opposite view that is now maintained by the most eminent European investigators and that is suggested, tentatively and quite without dogmatism, by the author of this book. It seems to him that all the phenomena recorded by himself, as, for that matter, all those recorded anywhere, are covered by the biologic theory, which assumes that no single psychic manifestation originates outside the medium; that the medium has power to project his mental and physical energy (accomplishing telepathy, telekinesis, etc.); that (in explanation of materializations) he has also power to project his own "fluidic double," or, in some cases, an indefinite "ideoplastic" vapor which he is able to mould into any shape by the action of his mind; and that all "controls" and "spirits" are parasitic personalities of the medium or some one present with him. Perhaps it depends upon the individual mind whether these assumptions shall seem more or less vast than those of the spiritistic theory. In any case, it is astonishing that anything can seem more important to us, more engrossing, than the issue between these momentous alternatives.

We are either, many of us, magicians, vehicles of incalculable forces, airy demonstrators of the penetrability of matter, blithe trippers into fourth-dimensional space, mothers of magically born beings who are made of our very substance and who return to remerge themselves into that substance;—we are all this, or we are in practically constant communication with a world of discarnate intelligences. Yet few of us appear to care profoundly what the truth of it may be. Most of us are content to leave the whole matter in the hands of a small society of investigators. It is true that affiliation with the unseen is not the attribute of every temperament; but everybody can learn to accept the fact,—sufficiently established in this single book of Mr. Garland's,—that the human body is the lodging-place of miracles.

What we call “popular science” is peculiarly congenial to the American mind. Would Americans regard psychic matters with greater respect if they should become able to dissociate them from spiritualism, to class them as science rather than as religion? Would the astonishing facts that Mr. Garland has done a genuine service in simply setting forth then come to seem approximately as important as a surgical operation or a machine for multiplying the horrors of war?

OLIVIA HOWARD DUNBAR.

“SCIENCE AND IMMORTALITY.”*

ALTHOUGH the belief in immortality rests essentially upon certain broad rational grounds, familiar and open to all, the author of the present volume pleads for the worth of the contributory evidence, offered by scientific investigation, in support of continued personal existence after death. His general position is that set forth in Myers's monumental work on “Human Personality.” That is, there lies not only beyond the subliminal activities of any given patient, but also beyond any possible explanation of telepathy, a considerable body of psychic phenomena, carefully sifted by thorough scientific methods, which can be accounted for alone on the supposition of veritable messages from discarnate intelligences.

That such phenomena are meagre, or for the most part trivial,

* “Science and Immortality.” By Sir Oliver Lodge, F.R.S. New York: Moffat, Yard & Company.